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Social Exclusion and Gender-Based Violence.

Foreword from the guest editor.

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We are pleased to present this special monographic number of Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences dedicated to gender-based violence and social exclusion. It is widely recognized that within the general landscape of exclusion woman is possibly the least visible manifestation of this phenomenon and perhaps the one affected by the worst lacks. Indeed, women constitute the clearest exponent of the results of processes of social exclusion. However, the topic of gender has been an area barely touched upon in social research into exclusion. For this reason, we wish to contribute to filling this vacuum, always hard to approach. On these lines, the main aim we hope to achieve with this volume is to present materials for debate, analysis and intervention upon the current research dynamics affecting women and their links with social exclusion and gender-based violence. We attempt to make plain not just the representations of the women involved themselves, but also the changes noted in the response capacity of social services, professional and research activities. The questions handled, analysed, considered as problems, and critiqued in the chapters composing this volume refer to a number of aspects. Among these, there is the question of how these women and their families relate to their surroundings and to social arrangements. There are also the topics of which formal and informal networks are being activated or reactivated and of what effects the crisis has had upon their dependents, whether these

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are from earlier or later generations. Further, there are the points of what is done to empower these women (if they demand it), especially with the worsening conditions under the current crisis; and of what relationships can be established between changes and the economic conditions in various regions or countries, linked to start-up strategies, running from supranational institutions down to local bodies. In brief, the objective is to give an account of advances in research having to do with the situation of women at risk of social exclusion and in situations of gender violence.

Some of the contributions to this volume were presented at the International Conference on Women at Risk of Social Exclusion and Gender-Based Violence (ICWAR 2014) held at the University of Leon in Spain between 7 and 9 May, 2014. Certain of the aspects covered, which, in sum, are the themes dealt with by the articles making up this publication, refer to theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of social exclusion of women and gender-based violence. There are professional viewpoints, historical representations, and the role of the media, social networks and new technologies. There are the topics of co-operation for development and of migrations, of the social and health aspects of the question, specifically including questions of incapacity and ageing. There are gender studies proper when considering social exclusion and women in the rural environment and their entry into social and work circles in areas on the edges of cities. Another fundamental question is education against exclusion and gender violence, together with an always interesting topic, often talked of, but rarely studied, the integration of a gender perspective into higher education and its application in the shape of innovatory teaching strategies.

Within such a broad panorama of social exclusion and gender-based violence, a glimpse at the different contributions forming the publication shows that the majority of them refer to the nearby cultural context, but also that there are some of great interest which refer to distant cultural settings. In these, women do not always enjoy the same escape routes from the crushing cycle of domestic violence, and there are no experts to advise, nor resources to support, women to the same extent as may be found in our surroundings. It is important to realize that long before feminism or movements fighting against violence reach these places, there are women struggling for their dignity, and this in difficult cultural contexts which are adverse for their efforts. Simultaneously, in the civilized world, so much is happening, so many technological advances, so many social changes, and yet the expressions “sexual abuse” and “gender-based violence” have become day-to-day terms.

Finally, we should like to express our gratitude for the work of the reviewers for this volume, whose efforts reviewing, making suggestions and correcting have contributed to raising the standard of the papers gathered together here. These referees were:

Alexandra Esteves
Alfredo Martín García
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María José Pérez Álvarez
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Oscar Fernández Álvarez
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Pedro Gabriel Silva,
Raquel Martínez Peñín,

To sum up, we hope that this publication will be able to contribute to understanding our surroundings a little better and to transforming them. This is because structures of dominance are more comprehensible when it is grasped how we continue to be subject to them even in the most intimate and cruel oppression. We hope that you will enjoy reading the papers.

Best regards

Dr. O. Fernandez